

SB 135 - Clarify use of tracking dogs on a leash for wounded game (Sen. Joe Balyeat)

Last year I brought this same bill. Provided tons of evidence that this is a good idea. FWP's response was – "We already let you do this, so you don't need the bill". You'll note from the letters that FWP was questioned several times about specifics – Can you carry a firearm for protection? If your dog finds the critter and it's still alive can you finish it off, subject to archery/rifle regs, seasons, daylight hours, etc? The answer to all questions was "Yes. You can only use a bow if its archery season, you can't shoot at night, etc."

So my own Representative said we don't need the bill, FWP says it's already legal. I told him at the time it was crazy to just trust that FWP's current opinion wouldn't suddenly change absent any statutory language. Sure enough, it didn't take very long at all, after the session was over FWP came out with regs saying "Dogs may be utilized.... But the hunter may not possess a bow or firearm while doing so." Not only does that directly contradict the promises made last session, but it's downright crazy to require a guy in griz/wolf country to track a wounded critter without a weapon. Not to mention that it also violates his second amendment right to self-defense. But finally, what if the hunter finds his critter wounded... with no weapon? What's he supposed to do – just sit there and let his dogs chew it to death?

So you can see why we need the bill --- The clearer the law is in statute, the less subjective it is, the less chance there'll be that the rules will suddenly change, and the better off it is for all parties involved... including game wardens.

I didn't recruit any proponents to show up and testify, I instead just got 4 detailed letters of support from people knowledgeable both about the use of dogs, and the history behind this bill. So please read through some of the detailed letters I've provided. Documentation indicating that without tracking dogs, we could be wasting as much as 2/3 of the game during archery season. And further studies showing that with the use of tracking dogs, that success ration jumps form 33% up to 98%. It's compelling evidence that you should be for this bill regardless of whether your pro-hunting or anti-hunting; because no one is in favor of wasting our wildlife resource.

I'll listen to testimony if any, answer your questions, and urge a do pass on SB135.